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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

December 27, 1996

Dear Russ:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the East Timor issue. I share your desire to see this situation resolved in a peaceful and constructive manner.

My Administration has consistently encouraged the government of Indonesia to improve its human rights record, and has strongly supported dialogue among the relevant players that will lead to political reconciliation in East Timor. Although I did not have the opportunity to speak privately with President Soeharto at the Manila APEC meetings, I will continue to use every opportunity, as I have in the past, to encourage the resolution of the Timor question in a manner that is consistent with universal values with regard to human rights.

I note with interest your support of a UN-sponsored self-determination referendum in East Timor. I will take your idea into consideration. In the meantime, we will continue to support the UN-sponsored discussions between the Portuguese and the Indonesians, as well as the "intra-Timorese" dialogue.

As we work to achieve progress on Timor, we also should recognize the importance of a strong relationship with Indonesia, a country of strategic significance that has helped to promote several common goals in the region. Indonesia has been an active supporter of maintaining the U.S. presence in Asia, and has advocated a deeper regional security dialogue and a stronger APEC. The combination of engagement and pressure represents our best hope of seeing the situation resolved to our satisfaction.

I appreciate learning your views on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

The Honorable Russell Feingold
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-4904